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SUBJECT: PRESIDENCY STIRS UP CONTROVERSY AGAIN - APPOINTS
TWO NEW OFFICIALS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. While Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate was off strengthening bilateral ties with Gabon and Equatorial Guinea last week, the presidency took advantage of the PM's absence to stir up controversy once again. On March 1, Conte issued two presidential decrees, one naming a new prefect to Kindia and the other, a new president for the National Communications Commission (CNC). Both appointees have shady reputations and at least one is a staunch supporter of the president. The decrees appear to be another challenge to Kouyate. If he comes out on bottom as he did in early January 2008, the population is likely to see these appointments as evidence of further weakening of the consensus government. END SUMMARY.

HAVE I GOT A JOB FOR YOU!

¶2. (SBU) The new prefect of Kindia, Abdoulaye Siller Camara, fills a position left vacant by the death of the former prefect in February. A contact at the Ministry of Interior and Security (MIS), who also happens to be from Camara's neighborhood and a former classmate, told POL LES that Camara is from Dubreka and closely connected to Elhadj Sekhouna Soumah, a member of Conte's inner circle who is well protected by the presidency. According to contact, Camara visited Conte a few weeks ago, accompanied by Sekhouna Soumah. Conte reportedly asked Camara what he had been up to; Camara told the president that he had not been doing anything since the January 2007 labor strike. Contact said that Conte instructed his Secretary General, Sam Soumah, to draft up a decree to appoint Camara as Prefect of Kindia. (NOTE - Sekhouna Soumah is likely a distant relative of Sam Soumah's although the exact connection is unclear. They are both from the same region. END NOTE).

¶3. (SBU) MIS contact also told POL LES that he suspects the Minister of Interior never saw the decree before it was signed, which is unusual since it involves an appointment of one of his subordinates. According to contact, there are some clear errors in the decree that would not have been included if the document had been properly cleared. Breaking with standard protocol, the appointment decree reportedly does not detail any of Camara's previous experience, nor does it list the Guinean equivalent of his social security number.

¶4. (SBU) Camara is widely viewed as corrupt, having reportedly mismanaged and embezzled funds during his previous stint as prefect of Dinguirare. Prominent union leader Dr. Ibrahima Fofana told Poloff on March 4 that Camara was the first government official to be chased out of office during

the civil unrest in early 2007 and his reappointment signifies further deterioration of an increasingly tenuous political situation. Fofana emphasized that the PM retains the right to appoint prefects and the president's action is in strict violation of the January 27 protocol, similar to his January firing of the communications minister. Various youth organizations in Kindia have expressed their dissatisfaction with the appointment, and according to the press, have notified officials of their intent to demonstrate on March 5 in protest.

15. (SBU) The Governor of Kindia, who was appointed by the PM in July 2007, told LES over the telephone that she could not comment on Camara's appointment because she has not personally met him yet. She said that it is too early to say anything.⁸ However, the governor added that she does not want trouble in Kindia. She added that the reports of youths, intent to demonstrate are unfounded and that no demonstrations are planned.

AND WHILE I'M AT IT...

16. (SBU) Conte's appointment of Tibou Kamara as the new president of the CNC is also stirring up controversy. The CNC is the chief regulatory body of the media in Guinea, and while the president maintains direct authority over the institution, the appointment of yet another controversial figure in the wake of the president's appointment of a new communications minister continues to raise questions about the future direction and autonomy of the press. Tibou Kamara is a close associate of former prime minister and opposition political party leader Cellou Dalein Diallo. The CNC recently suspended Tibou for slander against the prime minister, but in a complete turnaround thanks to the president, he is now running the organization that suspended him for questionable reporting. According to various contacts, Tibou's appointment is illegal because Guinean law mandates that certain officials, including the president of the CNC, must be more than 40 years old at the time of appointment, and Tibou is only 35.

COMMENT

17. (SBU) Every time the PM leaves the country, he gives the president and his entourage another opportunity to manipulate Guinea's tenuous political balance of power in favor of the president. However, it is unclear as to whether the president orchestrated this latest development himself or whether it was one of his cronies. The prefect's appointment is being interpreted as another twist of the knife in the heart of the January 27 Accords while the CNC appointment is enraging the press. There has already been some public reaction, but it is unclear to what extent the population will demonstrate its dissatisfaction with these appointments. The fact that there is a mechanism in place to review the implementation of the January 27 Accords (the Committee de Suivi) may mitigate any immediate reaction, but the seeds of discontent will continue to fester under the surface until the underlying leadership problem is resolved. If the appointments go uncontested, they are likely to be interpreted as further weakening Kouyate's executive powers.

END COMMENT.
CARTER